



# Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:  
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER CONCERNS  
PO BOX 1021, EVANSTON, IL 60204-1021 \* UMAFFIRMATION@YAHOO.COM \* WWW.UMAFFIRM.ORG

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## Special points of interest:

- Affirmation's Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration
- Beth Stroud Appeal
- Annual Meeting: Apr. 2 in LA
- Membership

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## Coming Out of the Wilderness

By Randall Miller

*"Didn't you love everybody when  
you come out the wilderness –  
Come out the wilderness, come out  
the wilderness?"*

*Didn't you love everybody when you  
come out the wilderness?*

*A' leaning on our God." –*

Traditional Spiritual

As Affirmation moves through the celebration of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, hopefully there will be many opportunities to look back on a rich history, and to ponder the road ahead. I am convinced that there is still a vast network of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender United Methodists who have been touched by Affirmation's witness and ministry. If ever there were a full gathering of this far-flung tribe, I have no doubts but that we would turn the world and church upside down (or would that be "left-side up"?).

As just one long-time Affirmation member and supporter, I am still thankful for the powerful sense of liberation and of "church" generated by the Affirmation National Meetings. Very often, when I am asked in religious settings about where and when I have had a powerful experience of God's grace, I point to the love and care that I

received as a "baby gay" in the Nashville and Washington, DC local chapters as well as the bi-annual national meetings.

I know that there is now an active and lively debate about Affirmation's future directions. This is as it should be. Truly vital organizations must be capable of responding to current and future needs or they should go out of business. As Affirmation strategizes to meet the needs of the next decade, perhaps it's time to focus on some of the progressive principles and values that have made the organization strong:

*Come out, come out wherever you are! LGBT folks (as well as many others) are so frequently taught "the gospel of the divided self." Coming out is the first step to claiming whole, healthy lives. As Armistead Maupin's character, Michael, expresses so beautifully in *Tales of the City*:*

*Being gay has taught me tolerance, compassion and humility. It has shown me the limitless possibilities of living. It has given me people whose passion and kindness and sensitivity have provided a constant*

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*Coming out of the Wilderness (Continued from page 1)*

*source of strength. It has brought me into the family of [humanity], Mama, and I like it here. I like it.*

*"Your silence will not protect you."* Those who experience oppression first-hand have the right to speak about or confront their oppression directly. No one else, no matter how well-meaning, can speak about someone else's oppression better than those who suffer it day to day. Therefore, LGBT people must be at the forefront of the struggle for LGBT liberation in the church and the larger society.

*Work to dismantle all forms of oppression.* The roots of homophobia and heterosexism are deeply entwined with the roots of misogyny and sexism. If we are serious about uprooting homophobia and heterosexism, we will also work to remove all of the obstacles to the full empowerment of women. As Audre Lorde says so clearly: "You can not use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house."

*You gotta' be a witness.* In the face of United Methodist Church's intransigence regarding the full inclusion of LGBT persons, we must provide a witness that we are invited guests to God's great feast. Our witness is not about "winning" – though most of us would welcome this. Our witness is to the power and grace that comes in living out and proud.

The principles and values listed above are only part of Affirmation's rich legacy. Feel free to add to the list. These days when I am asked what is the biggest difference between Affirmation now and the late 80's – early 90's when I served as co-spokesperson, I tell them that in many ways Affirmation has come out of the wilderness. For many years, it seemed as if we were like the lone voices of the prophets, crying in the wilderness. But these days we are surrounded by an ever-expanding and beloved crowd of friends, family, and allies who have decided that they can no longer be silent. If there is any hope to be had in what often seem harsh and uncompromising times, it is that we are no longer alone. But then of course, we never really were.

*"Didn't you love everybody when you come out the wilderness –  
Come out the wilderness, come out the wilderness?"*

*Didn't you love everybody when you come out the wilderness?*

*A' leaning on our God."*

## Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication.

Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

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Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,  
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## Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005



## Affirmation National Council

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North Central Jurisdiction  
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Rev. David Meredith  
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Kathryn Mitchem, Co-Convener  
Southeast Jurisdiction

Clarence R. (Rusty) Norment  
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Jim Palmquist  
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Macungie, PA

Rev. Kenneth I. Rowe,  
Co-Spokesperson  
Western Jurisdiction  
San Francisco, CA

Rev. Margo Tenold  
Western Jurisdiction, CA

Rev. Vivian Waltz  
At-Large  
Alum Bank, PA

## Beth Stroud Appeals Decision Convicting Her of Being Self-Avowed Practicing Lesbian

by Jim Palmquist and Peggy Gaylord

Shortly after Christmas, Irene Elizabeth "Beth" Stroud decided to appeal her conviction in the church trial that stripped her of her ordination credentials on December 2, 2004. While reluctant to do this because she is tired and does not like to be in the spotlight, she decided that "there are questions the larger church needs to discuss and wrestle with," issues important for a denomination painfully divided over homosexuality. At the church trial in December, her counsel was not allowed to present testimony about the "overall message" of The Book of Discipline, and how it relates to her case.

"When I take the really long view, I know there will be a different outcome," she said. "In the long run, I feel the church will change, and I will be a part of that." The "miracle of the trial," she said, has been the "spirit of listening and understanding" that followed. She said she has had conversations with church conservatives as well as supporters, even ministers who convicted her.

The presiding judge at her trial, retired Bishop Joseph Yeakel, did not allow her to present part of her prepared oral legal and theological arguments, and disallowed six witnesses' oral testimony at her trial, but included their arguments in the record in written form. That action allows the Committee on Appeal to now consider those factors during their appellate process of reviewing Beth Stroud's case.

The appeal arguments center on statements of law and policy contained in The Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions which conflict with the proscription of gays and lesbians in ordained ministry. Beth Stroud wants the appeals panel to consider statements, like the ones she paraphrases, that "call us as a church to stand against every form of discrimination" and "treat all people as equally loved by God."<sup>1</sup> Other references in The Book of Discipline may also be utilized. "When you look at those provisions of The Discipline and some of the prohibitions on homosexuality, you have to make a choice," she said.

The appeal may also argue that the way the jury pool was selected may have flawed the trial process. No one was allowed to be on the jury if he or she could not, for reasons of conscience, uphold The Book of Discipline's ban of homosexual ministers. This prevented the jury pool from being truly Beth's peers in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference. About 15 potential jurors excused themselves from the pool.

In reference to the appeal process, The Book of Discipline, Paragraph 2715.7, "the appellate body shall determine two questions only: (a) Does

(Continued on page 4)

*Stroud Appeal Process Begins (Continued from page 3)*

the weight of the evidence sustain the charge or charges? (b) Were there such errors of Church law as to vitiate the verdict and/or the penalty?" Trial records and arguments from counsel will determine the answers to those questions. The Committee on Appeal is not allowed to hear witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

The counsel for the church has until March 16th to prepare an argument. It is expected that the nine-member Jurisdictional Committee on Appeal will review the trial record shortly thereafter. This committee represents a cross-section of the Annual Conferences in the Northeast Jurisdiction, but excludes representatives from Beth's Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference. The Committee on Appeal is chaired by Rev. William "Scott" Campbell, the pastor of Harvard-Epworth UMC in Cambridge Massachusetts, a Reconciling Congregation. Rev. Campbell indicates that the date of the appeal will probably be scheduled for the end of April, in the Baltimore-Washington area, and will be an open event per Beth Stroud's request so that anyone may attend. The date will be established by mid-February (check [www.umaffirm.org](http://www.umaffirm.org) for updated info).

The Committee on Appeal has the following options: to do nothing; to order a new trial in Eastern Pennsylvania; or to refer questions on interpretation of The Book of Discipline to the

Judicial Council, the Church's final authority on such issues.

"This is what Christians do," Beth Stroud said. "This is an example of Jesus. When you see injustice and experience injustice, you take a stand for what you believe is right." Stroud continues in her position at First UMC Germantown, but cannot perform baptisms or preside over communion.

Beth Stroud is one of three homosexual clergy members tried since the UMC General Conference in 1984 passed its ban of homosexual clergy. The Rev. Rose Mary Denman, of New Hampshire, was defrocked in 1987, and The Rev. Karen Dammann, of Washington state, was acquitted last March.

Affirmation agrees with the trial presiding judge, retired Bishop Joseph Yeakel, who told Beth, "The day will come when the church apologizes for this decision." That day cannot come too soon!

<sup>1</sup> AP Article by Richard N. Ostling, Lesbian Minister to Appeal, *The Washington Times* and *Philadelphia Daily News*, Gay Ex-minister to Fight Defrocking by Ron Goldwyn

<sup>2</sup> Process for Stroud Appeal Begins, January 28, 2005, A UMNS Report By Linda Bloom

"On the evening of the trial verdict, Beth and I gathered to eat dinner with our family, as well as with a few of our supporters who had been most generous in their pro bono services. The depth of joy we experienced on that evening was profound, particularly given the day's context and struggles. Indeed, in breaking bread together, we experienced that Grace which comes from the knowledge that nothing 'in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Rom. 8:38-39, NRSV) We are increasingly aware that so many of you struggle on through understandable feelings of deep alienation and loss...We invite each of you....to dedicate ourselves, in the words of the 2000 General Conference of the UMC, 'to a ministry of Christ-like hospitality and compassion.'"

--Chris Paige, Beth's life partner, from [www.bethstroud.info](http://www.bethstroud.info)



## Affirmation's Official Annual Meeting

The corporate annual meeting of Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, Inc., will be held Saturday, April 2, at 2:00 pm at the Travelodge Hotel LAX Airport Century Inn, 5547 West Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90045, phone (310) 649-4000. For Voices of Faith participants, there will be a free shuttle from the Los Angeles Sheraton Gateway Hotel to the Travelodge.

All Affirmation members are invited to participate. The items of business will include:

- Elections of members for full terms to the Board of Directors
  - Election of members to fill vacancies of Directors
  - Report of the Strategic Visioning Plan
  - Consideration of By-Laws changes
  - Any other business that the Directors deem appropriate
- The Directors constitute the Affirmation Council.

Would you consider taking the opportunity to shape the voice of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in The United Methodist Church? Affirmation is looking for new members for its governing Council. In addition to having a strong commitment to change the UMC to become more accepting and supportive of LGBT people, Council members are committed to attending three long-weekend meetings per year (travel expenses reimbursed) for up to three years, completing agreed-to tasks, and maintaining communication with other Council members.

Council members will be elected at the corporate meeting in Los Angeles. Please let Kathryn Mitchem [REDACTED] or Jim Palmquist [REDACTED] or any other Council member know of your interest, especially if you are not going to be in Los Angeles. Self-nominations are encouraged. Unlike local settings, most in national leadership don't have a clue as to your time, talents, gifts, and service; so we welcome you to come forward and offer yourself. Prospective Council members will be asked ten questions about their commitment to work with Affirmation.

1. How familiar are you with Affirmation?
2. Are you committed to and supportive of the nature and mission of Affirmation?
3. Do you have past history of attending our meetings, working with one of the chapters or volunteering with us at General Conference?
4. Are you comfortable with and capable of representing the diverse experiences and perspectives of LGBT United Methodists?
5. Will your present commitments allow for adequate participation in three 3-4 day Council meetings a year, and carrying out assignments between meetings including e-mail correspondence?
6. Are you sufficiently self-motivated so as to do the work of Affirmation on your own if no other Council members are close by?
7. Do you enjoy and/or can you tolerate demanding responsibilities in the midst of possible unappreciative, even hostile settings?
8. Can you work well with others, welcome and celebrate diversity, and cultivate group relational skills?
9. Have you experienced the consensus model of decision-making and/or are willing to develop your skills further?
10. Will you ask for help if you are unclear about any aspect of Affirmation's mission and policies or your own role? There will be opportunity to ask about or comment on anything else the nominee wishes.

## **Affirmation Thanks Broad Street UMC Of Columbus, Ohio**

Broad Street United Methodist Church offered Affirmation's National Council a wonderful welcome and generous hospitality for our winter meeting, January 14-17, 2005. Members of the congregation provided meals and transportation at all points of need. In addition, we were greatly inspired and supported through Sunday morning worship and a Martin Luther King worship experience.

A highpoint was the potluck lunch Sunday noon hosted by Broad Street's LGBT community. Approximately twenty-five of us enjoyed delicious food and fellowship, sharing stories of celebration and pain. Recent highpoints for them included a presence with several religious traditions at the local celebration of Massachusetts's recognition of same sex marriage; their own local church social justice advocate position within the outreach committee; and representation at Beth Stroud's trial. A particular highpoint for the whole congregation in September was a time of blessing for a local couple, and in May following General Conference, a sermon that was a call to action in the midst of hostility. A shared low point was the November election, which included the passing of an Ohio constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. The totality of the ban is creating much wider negative effects by its enforcement.

Broad Street UMC is in the process of becoming an official Reconciling Congregation, having completed a reconciling statement and exhibited a reconciling nature for quite some time. They find that the congregation is a magnet for those caught in the ordination route. Members share a deeper hope for more diversity at Broad Street, and more consciousness of the lack of people of color. The presence of a professional diversity consultant in the congregation provides a welcome and helpful challenge.

## **Biographical Notes on a New Affirmation Council Member**

Nancy Giese was elected to the Affirmation National Council at the January, 2005 meeting of the Council. She is a lesbian and ordained clergy, and has served churches for 12 years before taking a sabbatical to be "Mom". She is married to Lynn; they have two daughters, Hannah (age 7) and Katalin (age 6). Currently, Nancy runs her own daycare business and home schools both girls. She is also the Director of the Servant Leadership School of Central Ohio.

Nancy grew up in St. Paul, MN. Her first job was as a certified nurses assistant, introducing her to her first advocacy issues, in the areas of gerontology, elder abuse, and patient rights. She graduated from Moorhead State with a degree in elementary education. She taught elementary school in Minnesota and in the inner city of Jacksonville, FL. Her experience in the inner city allowed her to work in the areas of racism, child abuse, and children rights.

Her call to ministry came partially as a result of her experiences in the nursing home, and later as a teacher in the inner city schools. Nancy's advocacy work is done through participation in organizations including: NARAL, NOW, Arbor Day Society, American Heart Association, St. Jude, Christian Children's Fund, and the National Affirmation Council. She was active in Gay and Lesbian Affirming Disciples (GLAD) when serving Disciple congregations. Personally, she advocates for women's rights, GLBT rights, and is involved in helping those who face or have faced spiritual abuse. She has always been active in the United Methodist churches as a leader in some capacity.

Nancy has had her work published in several works of poetry and liturgy anthologies. She is in the Who's Who of International Poetry in 2004. She also writes regularly for newsletters and journals. She has written many courses for adult biblical and spiritual literacy and children's church school from a progressive, liberal point of view. She has kept a journal since high school, and loves to write sermons, liturgy, poetry and short stories. Other interests include: swimming, photography, travel, reading (Star Trek is a favorite), and spending time with friends.

## The Gift and Challenge of Membership

### Part 2: Our Prayers

By Vivian Ruth Waltz

In the winter newsletter, I wrote that I thought the membership vows of the United Methodist Church might hold something of value for us as members of Affirmation. Acknowledging that our relationships to the UMC are as diverse as we are (and some are tenuous or even adversarial), I want to explore the promise "to faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service."<sup>1</sup>

Although we are careful to convey that Affirmation has "no official ties to the United Methodist Church," I think most of us see our work as ministry, both within and outside the UMC. Our new mission statement makes that clear: "As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community."

The first way we can support the ministry of Affirmation is to faithfully participate by praying. Prayer is so much more than words, for often there are no words for those profound occasions when we are truly attuned to the Creative Energy of the universe. The inspirational contemplative monk, Thomas Merton, writes that in prayer or meditation we should not look for a "method" or "system," but cultivate an outlook of faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, trust, and joy. Henri Nouwen writes that when we are serious about prayer, we no longer consider it one of the many things we do in our life but, rather, the basic receptive attitude out of which all of life can receive new vitality.

Can we cultivate prayerful openness and expectation that the mission of pursuing full inclusion in the Church will be blessed as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community? Do we consistently give attention to the ways in which acceptance and celebration of LGBTQ persons might be relentlessly pursued in our lives and work within and outside of Affirmation? With trust and joy, can we reclaim the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ as a living prayer in our everyday interactions with all of God's children?

As members of Affirmation, we ask you to faithfully participate in and support our ministry with prayer, whatever that means to you. It is through our prayers that the ministry of Affirmation will receive new vitality.

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, para. 216.

## Book Review

### "Coming Out Through Fire: Surviving the Trauma of Homophobia" By Leanne Tigert

Read and reviewed by Rev. Nancy Giese, Affirmation Council member

For the GLBT community, experiencing homophobia and heterosexism is something faced regardless of the location or circumstance. Based upon this premise, Tigert gives us "a deeper picture of the process each one of us must go through to transform the trauma of homophobia and heterosexism." She uses the image of fire that is multi layered. Fire can "harm and heal, scare and empower". She expertly weaves theology and psychology with story to move us through a healing process to reconciliation and new life, not only for ourselves but also for our communities.

This is an excellent book for the GLBT community, allies, therapists, pastors, and anyone who is faced with the issues of homophobia and heterosexism in their lives. Whether you have been facing these things for years or are just recognizing the trauma experienced, this book will offer a positive and resilient paradigm for healing and thriving.



## Equipment needed!!

### For the Affirmation Oral History project:

The oral history recordings need to be done in digital format to ensure that they can be retained in formats that are subject to the least decay over time for future study. The current equipment being used is bulky and not easily transferable to DVD formats. In order to provide the best results the following equipment is desired:

- Video Camcorder with DVD recorder and audio line-in. (Example: Panasonic VDR-M50 DVD-RAM/DVD-R Camcorder, 18x Optical/500 Digital Zoom. \$700.00)
- Lavalier wireless microphone system (Example: Nady Systems Encore Duet Wireless Microphone System - Includes Encore Duet Receiver and (2) WHT-15 Handheld Transmitters with Shure SM-58 Microphone Heads. \$165.00)

The approximate cost for these (new) would be in the \$800—\$1000 range.

If you are interested in contributing, send a note to the Affirmation email: [umaffirmation@yahoo.com](mailto:umaffirmation@yahoo.com) with the subject "Oral History project", or send a letter to: Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204.

## Christian People of the Rainbow: Mutually Enriching Particularities

A retreat with: Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and James Marion

**June 9-12, 2005**

What can lesbian women, gay men, bisexual, and transgender people learn from one another's vastly divergent experiences and identities? Does church membership mean more to some of us than others, and if so, why? How can we deepen our shared faith in order to heal our distrust and fear of diversity? How can we strengthen our sense of a mutually appreciative community of disciples? Join us on the mountain as we explore the rainbow of spiritualities that grace the human experience, and face the challenge that acceptance of diversity is among the most important indicators of human spiritual growth.

Our time together will include presentations, interactive workshops, diverse discussion groups, music, partying and worship.

**Led by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott**, author of *Omnigender*, which won the Lambda Literary Award, and *Transgender Journeys*, co-authored with Venessa Sheridan.

**Co-led by James Marion**, Christian mystic who studied for the Catholic priesthood for eight years, but who is also a public policy lawyer, author of *Putting on the Mind of Christ*, and head of the Institute for Spiritual Awareness in Ft. Lauderdale.

6:30 pm Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch - \$345 (\$170 deposit)

### **Kirkridge Retreat Center**

2495 Fox Gap Road  
Bangor, PA 18013-6028  
(610) 588-1793  
[www.kirkridge.org](http://www.kirkridge.org)

The Kirkridge Retreat Center is located just west of the NJ/PA border about 5 miles south of I-80, Exit 307 (old Exit 50) in Stroudsburg, PA on Rt. 191.

## Affirmation Endorses Day of Silence

The National Council of Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns endorses this year's "Day of Silence". Sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the event is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13, 2005.

The Day of Silence, a project of GLSEN in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a national student-led effort in which participants take a vow of silence to peacefully protest the discrimination and harassment faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth in schools.

Affirmation's co-spokesperson, Rev. Peggy R. Gaylord, said, "We are pleased to affirm the mission of the Day of Silence. We recognize and acknowledge the importance of young people's roles in the social justice movement. They've asked us, 'What are you going to do to end the silence?' The first thing we're going to do is support their effort and tell others about it.

Last year's Day of Silence was the most successful and widely supported since the event's inception in 1996. An estimated record 300,000 students from more than 3,000 K-12 schools, colleges and universities in all 50 states participated.

Jesús Ortega, Executive Director of OUT YOUTH in Austin, was among the list of this year's endorsers to express his support for the event, "We at OUT YOUTH believe that a national day of silence in protest of anti-LGBT bias is remarkable, critical and important. The youth, by making a vow of silence for one day, scream beyond words: 'Equality for All Students.'"

In addition to observances throughout the day on campuses, many students participate in "Breaking the Silence" rallies at the Day's end, events at which students come together to express themselves and share their experiences with members of their local communities.

GLSEN announced mid-January that more than 70 new national and local organizations signed on in the first week of outreach. Organizations interested in showing support of the project can become endorsers on the Day of Silence website ([www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)), which also has more information and a complete collection of organizing materials. Endorsers to date may be seen at <http://www.dayofsilence.org/endorsements/endorsers.php>.

GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information on GLSEN's educational resources, public policy agenda, student organizing programs or development initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).



## Voices of Faith: From Swords to Plowshares

**March 31-April 2, 2005, Sheraton Gateway Hotel, Los Angeles, CA**

United Methodists from across the nation will gather to recall and reclaim our vocation as peacemakers.

Provocative theologian and biblical scholar, Ched Myers, will anchor the three-day conference by leading us through three one-hour Bible Studies.

Gifted musician, Jorge Lockward, will serve as music leader, and help us raise our voices for justice through song.

We will be touched, moved and inspired by the preaching of United Methodist ministers Rev. James Lawson, nonviolence activist and civil rights leader, and Rev. Janet Wolf, organizer, storyteller, and advocate for the poor and homeless.

Additional church and national leaders will be present including a special program on Thursday night "Promoting Peace in Israel/Palestine through Nonviolent Direct Action" featuring Mubarak Awad, Palestinian Peace Activist and Chair of Nonviolence International.

### ROOMS AT SHERATON GATEWAY

Reserve your room NOW (because they are limited) at the conference rate of \$95 (plus tax) by directly contacting the Los Angeles Sheraton Gateway Hotel by phone at (310) 642-1111. Make reservations with the "MFSA" code for the room discount rate. The hotel is within one mile of the airport. Free shuttle transportation is available from the airport to the hotel 24 hrs. a day at no cost.

The conference will begin promptly at 11 am on Thursday with registration opening at 9 am, and conclude on Saturday at 12:30 pm. Several of MFSA's partner organizations are planning gatherings in Los Angeles prior to and after the conference. Check the MFSA website for the most recent schedule.

Registration forms can be found on the MFSA website ([www.mfsaweb.org](http://www.mfsaweb.org)), and the conference schedule will be available soon. More details can also be found in the next issue of the SQB.

### Pre- and Post-Conference Events

Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Concerns is holding "An Affirmation Family Reunion" -- an evening of fellowship, worship, and celebration on Saturday, April 2, from 7:00 p.m.--9:00 p.m. This event will be one of several Affirmation 30th anniversary observances. For more information contact Affirmation at [umaffirmation@yahoo.com](mailto:umaffirmation@yahoo.com). See information on these events elsewhere in this issue.

Church Within A Church is also planning to meet prior to Voices of Faith. More information about Church Within a Church and the details for the March 30th meeting can be found on the web ([www.churchwithinachurch.org](http://www.churchwithinachurch.org)) or by contacting Cathy Knight, Marketing and Development Director for Church Within A Church, [REDACTED]

Parent's Reconciling Network (PRN) organizers will gather Saturday evening April 2-Monday, April 4 in Los Angeles. Contact: Barbara Olson [REDACTED]

Reconciling Ministries Clergy (RMC) will meet the day prior to Voices of Faith. Join the RMC through the Reconciling Ministries Network website ([www.rmnetwork.org](http://www.rmnetwork.org)) and be sure to identify as clergy for information on this meeting as it emerges. The Rev. David Meredith, Broad Street UMC, Columbus, Ohio is the convener.

United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church (UMOC) is sponsoring a meeting of progressive people of color Wednesday March 30th in Los Angeles. The theme for the day will be "Exploring the Relationship between Racism and Heterosexism." Details forthcoming. For more information please contact Dr. Traci West: [REDACTED]



### Newsletter Notes:

The editors want to apologize for the late arrival of the December 2004 issue. Our interest in covering the events surrounding Beth Stroud's trial for our membership, as well as holiday vacations, and delays at the printer, pushed our mailing past our targeted December 1 deadline into the middle of January. The newsletter was actually delivered to the Post Office on January 20th. This issue should put us back on a normal schedule of mailing dates of March 1, June 1, September 1 and December 1. However, since we are now mailing the newsletter by bulk mail, it may take extra time to be delivered to your home, especially if you are located on the west coast since the Post Office of origin is in the north east.

If you are interested in receiving an advance copy of the newsletter by email, send a message to [AffirmationNewsletter@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AffirmationNewsletter@yahoogroups.com) with a subject line of "Send me a copy of the newsletter." and include your name and mailing address. We will confirm that you are on our usual mailing list for the newsletter then add your email address so that you will receive an advance copy in Adobe Acrobat PDF format in addition to your regular "snail" mail copy. This will not be a substitute for your regular "hard" copy, but it may help you to get an electronic copy earlier so that you can plan for events.

Our June issue will be a special "Thirtieth Anniversary Issue," so if you have some thoughts about what Affirmation has meant to you and to your journey in or outside of the United Methodist Church, write them down and send them to: Affirmation, PO Box 1021; Evanston, IL 60204, and put "Newsletter" on the envelope or by email in Microsoft Word doc or rtf formats to:

[AffirmationNewsletter@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AffirmationNewsletter@yahoogroups.com). We want this to be your Newsletter so, not only for the June issue, but for any issue, your contributions are welcome.

### HEARTS ON FIRE! Eighth National Reconciling Convocation

LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2005

September 2-5, 2005: Friday-Monday

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Expect Exciting Worship, Engaging Bible Study, Challenging Workshops, and Creative Community with many talented leaders including Bishop Minerva Carcaño, Bishop Richard Wilke, Beth Stroud, Mark Miller, Heather Elkins, Dr. Jeffrey Kuan, Dr. Karen Oliveto, James Preston, Youtha Hardman-Cromwell Rev. Erin Swenson, Jorge Lockward, and more...

Nestled in the serenity of the Smoky Mountains in Western North Carolina, Lake Junaluska is located in Haywood County, known for the 18 peaks over 6,000 feet, more than any county east of the Mississippi River. The 200-acre lake is surrounded by 1,200 acres of beautiful rolling hills and valleys. Those who have visited have described their "Junaluska Experience" as a renewal of the heart, mind, body, and spirit.

To see more: [www.lakejunaluska.com](http://www.lakejunaluska.com).

### Notice:

If you are coming to any of the Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration activities, we urge you to bring photographs, visual records (photocopies), and other memorabilia to share your experiences and our rich history with other Affirmation members. Thank you!

# Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:  
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER CONCERNS

## IT'S OUR THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY!!!

Affirmation has celebrated previous anniversaries in Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas and Tacoma. This, our 30th year, will be celebrated in several ways and in several places. Please join in the celebrations!

Saturday, April 2, 2005

An Affirmation Family Reunion

7:00p.m. – 9:00p.m.

Hollywood First United Methodist Church,

Hollywood, California

6817 Franklin Ave. (corner of Highland)

Los Angeles, CA 90028

An evening of fellowship, worship, and celebration is being planned by Affirmation member Frank Wulf and his local design team.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Labor Day Weekend September 1-5, 2005

During the Reconciling Ministries Network Convocation at Lake Junaluska, NC

To honor our anniversary, Affirmation's 'gifts' to convocation participants will include

- A workshop titled "Thriving in a Hostile World"
- A dance one evening after the day's activities

Other Anniversary Year Efforts Include:

- A special anniversary edition of the newsletter to be published in June
- The launching of an anthology led by Council member Margo Tenold, and an oral history project led by Council member Diane DeLap – both efforts coordinated by Affirmation's Program Committee.



Affirmation: United Methodists for  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Concerns  
PO Box 1021; Evanston, IL 60204

[www.umaffirm.org](http://www.umaffirm.org)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut>